



**Toi Hutchinson**  
State Senator  
Illinois  
President, NCSL

**Jon Heining**  
General Counsel  
Legislative Council  
Texas  
Staff Chair, NCSL

**William Pound**  
Executive Director

Sept. 19, 2018

Secretary Sonny Perdue  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), the bipartisan organization representing the legislatures of our nation's states, territories, and commonwealths, recently held its 2018 Legislative Summit. After significant discussion and debate, the full conference readopted several policy positions concerning the relationship between states and the Department of Agriculture (USDA) as part of our National Agriculture Policy Directive. Those positions are summarized below.

#### **National Agriculture Policy Directive, Avian Flu Response**

In light of recent avian flu outbreaks in various states, NCSL urges the federal government to work with states to eradicate outbreaks and prevent contamination as poultry processing and production is not only a key driver of rural and state economies, but also delivers benefits the national economy and the country's international trade balance. NCSL and the states are willing partners in federal efforts to address avian flu and share best practices.

#### **National Agriculture Policy Directive, Cover Crop Research**

As concerns grow surrounding water quality, soil fertility, weed and nematode control, water retention and biodiversity, NCSL reiterates support for federal efforts to further the development, proliferation, and use of cover crops. Cover crops are essential to improving soil health and proven to create an environment that naturally resists diseases and pests, reducing the need of Nitrogen and other nutrients, and adding diversity to the natural biological life.

#### **National Agriculture Policy Directive, Pollinator Health**

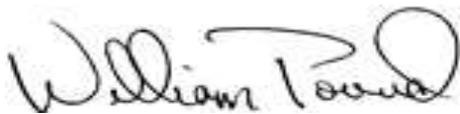
The negative ramifications of pollinator loss are well documented and pose a significant threat to U.S. agriculture and the ability of our farmers to feed a growing world population. Pollinators are vital organisms in the ecosystem, providing biodiversity, and ensuring agriculture economies continue to thrive. NCSL urges the federal government, as landowner and manager, regulator of pesticide products, and financial assistance provider to farmers and other private landowners, to develop best management practices that enhance pollinator habitats, provide technical assistance

in identifying and implementing projects to conserve pollinators, and assess the effects of systemic pesticides and parasites on pollinator health and take action, as appropriate, to protect pollinators.

In addition to the issues referenced above, our national agriculture policy directive is founded on the recognition that decisions affecting American agriculture must reflect a working partnership of the federal government with the states in both the formulation and implementation of policy. The directive includes provisions relating to beginning farmer programs, conservation programs, the Farm Credit System, crop insurance and many other policy issues.

For more information or if you have any follow up questions, please contact NCSL staff Ben Husch ([ben.husch@ncsl.org](mailto:ben.husch@ncsl.org)) and Kristen Hildreth ([kristen.hildreth@ncsl.org](mailto:kristen.hildreth@ncsl.org)). We look forward to continuing to work together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William T. Pound". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "W".

William T. Pound  
Executive Director  
National Conference of State Legislatures

Enclosure  
[National Agriculture Policy Directive](#)